

Virginia Cave Board

September 14, 2002

The Virginia Cave Board met in a regular business session on September 14, 2002 at the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Soil and Water Conservation Office in Staunton, Virginia. Chairman Bob Barnes called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Members Present

Mr. Bob Barnes
 Dr. Kurt Buhlmann
 Ms. Karen M. Kastning
 Ms. Barbara L. Moss
 Mr. Wil Orndorff (proxy for Ms. Carol Zokaites)
 Ms. Kathy Harbury (Department of Historic Resources)

Members Absent

Mr. Joe Davis
 Dr. John Holsinger
 Mr. Roy Powers
 Mr. Bill Keith
 Ms. Carol Zokaites

Non-members Present

Ms. Patti Barnes
 Mr. Robert Handley
 Dr. Ernst Kastning
 Ms. Judy Molnar
 Mr. Gary Moss
 Mr. Larry Smith
 Mr. Ted Kayes
 Mr. Joey Fagan
 Miss Travertine Orndorff
 Miss Neomi Orndorff

2. Introduction and Announcements

Chairman Bob Barnes welcomed members of the Virginia Cave Board and guests. He introduced Mr. Ted Kayes of the Richmond Area Speleological Society and Mr. Robert Handley of the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias. Ms. Carol Zokaites was unable to attend the meeting because of a death in her family. Mr. Larry Smith expressed regrets for Mr. Joe Davis, newly appointed Cave Board Member, who was unable to attend due to a prior commitment to attend a board meeting of the Shenandoah National Park. Dr. Holsinger is out of the country at a professional meeting. Mr. Roy Powers was unable to attend due to schedule conflicts. Mr. William Keith was unable to attend the meeting because of car problem encountered on way to the Board meeting.

The next order of business was to elect Officers to serve for coming year, 2002-2003. Chairman Barns opened the floor for nominations.

Barbara Moss was nominated for the position of Chairman and elected unanimously by acclamation.

Newly elected Chairman Moss took charge of the meeting and continued with the election of Officers.

Kurt Buhlmann was nominated for the position of Vice Chairman and elected unanimously by acclamation.

Karen Kastning was nominated for the position of Treasurer and elected unanimously by acclamation.

Joey Fagan was appointed as Secretary by the Board. Due to the new requirement that Board meeting minutes must be posted on the Internet within 2 weeks of Board meeting, the task of taking notes and preparing minutes will be handled by DCR staff. Joey Fagan is responsible for this duty for the time being.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the June 1, 2002 meeting were accepted with the following changes:

- Page 5 – sentence under “Buried Treasures” should read: “Karen Kastning announced to the Education Committee that the Saltville Museum is currently displaying the exhibit that the Board made in 1991. It is named “Caves: Buried Treasures of the Virginias.”
- Page 5 – Item 8 – correct spelling is “Wil Orndorff”

4. Treasurers Report

Treasurer Karen Kastning submitted the Treasurer’s report that was accepted by the Board.

Old Business

5. Committee Reports

A. Education Committee

- Cave Owner’s Newsletter – Karen Kastning reported the next issue of the Cave Owners Newsletter would be sent out by the end of September. Approximately 1200 landowners are on the mailing list compiled with the assistance of Phil Lucas of the Virginia Speleological Survey. A former list had approximately 1800 names and addresses, but many of those

addresses are no longer current. A note on the State Parks and Natural Areas Bond will be included in the newsletter. Karen will try to include the information flyer on the State Parks and Natural Areas Bond in the next newsletter mailing.

- Cave Appreciation Week – Plans are progressing for the 2002 Cave Appreciation Week. Larry Smith announced that Governor Warner has signed the Proclamation designating October 13 through 19 as Cave Appreciation Week. Mr. Smith displayed the original copy of the document for inspection by the Cave Board. Mr. Smith also distributed copies of the new Cave Appreciation Week Brochure. The printing of Teacher Letters is also complete.

Barbara Moss reported that work was progressing on preparation of educational materials for the Teacher Packets to be sent to teachers who request them as well as to the Show Caves in Virginia for distribution to teachers who visit those establishments. She reported that a letter was received from the AIMS Education Foundation granting limited permission to reproduce materials for three specified educational activities for the Teacher Packets.

Joey Fagan, reporting for Cave Board Member Carol Zokaites, noted that instead of mailing notifications about Cave Appreciation Week and the availability of the Teacher Packets, Ms. Zokaites has asked the Virginia Department of Education Science Coordinators to distribute the information by e-mail. The e-mail method of notification not only saved money, but also seems to work much better. After only a few days, she has received more than 80 requests for Cave Appreciation Week Teacher Packets. Sets of Cave Appreciation Week Brochures and Teacher Letters will be sent to show caves and a few other contacts for distribution.

A sample copy of the Teacher Packet for members prepared by Carol Zokaites was passed around for the Board to inspect. The members of the Board requested Carol send each of them a copy of a Teacher Packet when available in final form. The 2002 Cave Appreciation Week Teacher Packets will include: two Project Underground Lessons—sinkholes as a handout and Soda bottles on the back of the AGI poster, The AIMS lessons (previously referenced in the minutes), a booklet written by Kass Kastning, and some fact sheets and National Speleological Society Brochures, and a 2002 Cave Appreciation Week Poster. The materials for each packet will be placed in a large envelope with Project Underground Stickers and possibly a label acknowledging the Virginia Cave Board.

Wil Orndorff is working on preparing a 2002 Virginia Cave Appreciation Week Poster. The full color poster will be approximately 17x22 inches in size. This year's poster theme is Cave Biodiversity. A draft copy of the

poster was circulated among the members of the Board for corrections and suggestions. The cost of printing 1000 posters is about \$1,100, 2000 posters would cost about \$1,400. The consensus of the Board was to print 2000 copies of the posters.

Larry Smith outlined plans for the 2002 Cave Appreciation Week Event to be held at Endless Caverns at New Market, Virginia. The date for the event has yet to be determined, but will likely be October 14, 15 or 16. The actual date chosen will attempt to avoid scheduling conflicts for the invited speakers. The program will take place in the afternoon and will include a series of four short talks and the formal announcement of the Governor's Cave Appreciation Week Proclamation. Current plans call for Joe Maroon, Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to act as Master of Ceremonies. It is hoped that Secretary of Natural Resources Tayloe Murphy or Deputy Secretary David Paylor can attend the event and address the gathering. Virginia Cave Board Chairman Barbara Moss and a representative from the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias will each give a short presentation. Attendees will be given a tour of Endless Caverns. The cost for the Cave Appreciation Event is projected to be approximately \$500 - \$600, which will be funded through grants. Bob Barns will check with the Richmond Area Speleological Society (RASS) to see if they would be willing to sponsor the event.

Invitations the Cave Appreciation Week Event will be sent to interested parties. It was suggested that Jeff Southard, Assistant Commissioner of Environment, Transportation Planning and Regulatory Affairs for the Virginia Department of Transportation be specially invited to the Cave Appreciation Week Event. It was noted that VDOT owns more caves than does any other Virginia landowner.

Expenses associated with Cave Appreciation Week are projected to be approximately \$2100. Grants from the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias, The US Environmental Protection Agency through the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and the Richmond Area Speleological Society Grotto of the National Speleological Society and other sources are expected to cover all associated costs. Karen Kastning will seek a grant from the National Speleological Society to help pay for Cave Appreciation week related expenses.

B. Environmental Response Committee

- Mr. Phil Lucas, Director of the Virginia Speleological Survey (VSS) submitted the following written report to the Board:

- As of Sept. 12, 2001, the VSS has records of 4053 caves with 446 miles of surveyed passages within these caves. This past year 115 caves and 14 miles of surveyed passages have been added to the database. Obviously several significant new discoveries have been made this past year and there is every reason to believe this rate of discovery to continue because of well-organized groups focusing on specific areas and the willingness to dig in locations that have promise. The drought has provided low water levels and as a result, several connections have been made such as, Sam Bells Cricket Cave and Sam Bells Cave were connected on Feb. and Kerns Cave No. 1 and Kerns Cave No. 2 have been connected in July. Another interesting discovery in a newly discovered (dug) Highland County cave is an Igneous Dike about 18 inches wide that intersected by the cave passage. This is the first known occurrence for such a phenomena in a Virginia Cave. Low water allows further entry into Dales Cave, Smyth Co. where an eight-inch creature was briefly seen. The reporter says the general body shape was like an amphiuma.
- As previously mentioned, news of some of these discoveries has not been forthcoming because of landowner requirements and concerns for privacy and liability. Also it is our belief that recreational caving is steadily on the increase especially by groups outside the NSS caving community. This continues to put a strain on well-known caves some which receive over a thousand visitors each year.
- We have enjoyed the support of DCR in the review of project in karst areas. Rene' Hypes, Wil Orndorff, and Joey Fagan have been very supportive and helpful. We have also been working with them on the Conservation Sites being developed for significant caves. At our VSS annual meeting in October we will address the proposed contract being proposed between the VSS and DCR concerning the Significant Cave List.
- Project planning continues by VDOT for the widening of I81, and there is an organization called Smart Solutions that is proposing that separate truck lanes be added. As previously mentioned when Interstate was first constructed, the entrance of Billy Williams Cave was covered over by the north-bound lane shoulder. As stated in a previous report: (The cave had, at that time, isopods, amphipods, crayfish and millipedes collected by Dr. Holsinger and was considered an important biological cave. According to an old report in our files, this was a cave that had been known for a long time and had old signatures on the walls many from VMI in Lexington. As a part of my review comments, it was recommended that this cave be re-opened perhaps with a culvert type access where a local caving organization can retain a key and manage the cave for further study such as ground water monitoring.) Also involved is Interstate 81 Cave which will almost certainly be impacted. Perhaps some actions could be taken now to help with preparations for our final recommendations.

- There are 1839 cave owner addresses in our database. Some of these are not correct. As mentioned earlier we “lost” a considerable number of addresses when many counties converted to “street address” to comply with the 911 emergency requirements. A very valid task would be to recover these addresses. When a Cave Owner Newsletter is ready, labels will be quickly provided by the VSS.
- The VSS now has a web site, Virginiacaves.org, designed by Brad Blase, web master. This is proving to be a useful tool and many inquiries and new information is being received.
- The VSS has added a Karst Spring Database to the files and would like to thank Zenah Orndorff for her help with the Lat. Long. conversion to UTM’s. There are over 1600 karst springs recorded and this project is still in the early stages of development.
- In the minutes of the last Cave Board meeting, I noticed a resolution was passed thanking me for my assistance. Thanks for that recognition. It is appreciated. (Submitted by Mr. Phil Lucas).
- In response to Mr. Lucas’s concerns about Billy Williams Cave, Wil Orndorff suggested Mr. Vince Ruark, who works in the VDOT Staunton District Office, as a contact. In reference to concerns about Interstate 81 Cave, Mr. George Young, who works in the Bristol District Office, was suggested as a contact. It was reported that it appeared that rock debris had been deposited near the entrance of Interstate 81 Cave (perhaps from an errant maintenance crew). Roy Powers and Bill Keith might be able to look into the potential problems with Interstate 81 Cave.
- Wil Orndorff, Karst Protection Coordinator for the DCR Division of Natural Heritage Karst Program presented a report for Ms. Rene’ Hypes, Project Review Coordinator for DCR/DNH. Ms. Hypes’ report described selected cave and karst related projects recently reviewed by the Division of Natural Heritage. Mr. Orndorff noted that approximately one third of the cave and karst related projects recently reviewed by DNH were referenced in Ms. Hypes report.
- Wil Orndorff outlined the environmental review issues of the proposed CPV Warren Cogeneration Project. The Madison Cave Isopod (*Antrolana lira*) was found in a cave near the proposed power plant. Cooperation between the DCR Division of Natural Heritage, Department of Games and Inland Fisheries, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and CPV Warren have resulted in the development of a plan that will protect the isopod while allowing the plant to be built.

The developer will provide funds to purchase 14 acres for protection of the cave and the isopod. Stormwater treatments for the development will be designed to handle a 100-year storm event while maintaining high stormwater quality flow into the cave with a maximum two-year flow rate. Negotiations between the parties are still being worked out.

- Other projects discussed by Mr. Orndorff were: Powell Valley Electric Cooperative potential impact to the Gray Bat (*Myotis grisescens*) in Litton Cave. Water from the project will drain into the Powell River, away from the cave. Cliff Mountain near Duffield was also discussed.
- Kurt Buhlmann noted that these successes should be reported to citizens and landowners through publications like the Cave Owner's Newsletter, Virginia Wildlife, and through other news media.
- Wil Orndorff reported that the first of many loads of sawdust was removed from the Russell Lumber Site in Lee County. The partially decomposed sawdust is being used as a soil additive for surface mine reclamation. This huge cleanup project is due to cooperative efforts among U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tennessee Valley Authority, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Mines Minerals and Energy, Department of Environmental Quality, Black Diamond RC&D, Daniel Boone Soil and Water Conservation District, Virginia Department of Forestry, Russell Lumber Company, Sigmond Coal, and the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias. Many years of sawmill waste was dumped by Russell Lumber Company in and around a large sinkhole containing Thompsons Cedar Cave, the type locality for the Lee County Cave Isopod (*Lirceus usdagalun*). Pollutants leaching from the huge sawdust pile negatively impact the groundwater and the underlying karst aquifer causing the apparent extirpation of the Lee County Cave Isopod from Thompsons Cedar Cave (TCC). Recent monitoring trips into TCC have observed up to 100 *Lirceus* in the cave.

6. Project Underground Report

Wil Orndorff reported for Carol Zokaites. The Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Natural Heritage received a \$43,000 grant for Karst Environmental Education through the US Environmental Protection under Chapter 319 of the Clean Water Act that focuses on nonpoint source pollution. Ms. Zokaites is active in Karst Education for a variety of audiences and continues to organize and present many Project Underground workshops throughout Virginia.

7. Grand Caverns Update

Larry Smith reported on the status of Grand Caverns. Grand Caverns is currently owned by the Upper Valley Regional Park Authority, which is a cooperative venture

of the Virginia counties of Augusta and Rockingham, and the cities of Harrisonburg and Staunton. The Authority has encountered financial problems and may have to close Grand Caverns if a solution to their fiscal problems cannot be found. The Commonwealth of Virginia (or more specifically, the Department of Conservation and Recreation) has been approached with an offer to have ownership of the cave transferred to the Commonwealth. Required improvements to the infrastructure on the property and availability of funding to pay for those improvements are an unresolved issue. The current land area of the Grand Caverns property is smaller than is typically managed as a Virginia State Park. Any action on the part of the state would probably hinge on passage of the State Parks and Natural Areas General Obligation Bond Referendum on the November 2002 Ballot. Reasons for making Grand Caverns a State Park include preservation of the caves' scenic, biological, educational, and historic value. At present, the state does not own Grand Caverns.

(Letter from Dr. John Holsinger to DCR Director Joe Maroon)

Larry Smith noted that Dr. John Holsinger had sent a letter to DCR Director Joe Maroon dated July 11, 2002 on behalf of the Virginia Cave Board expressing concern for the fate of Grand Caverns as well as Fountain Cave and nearby Madison Saltpetre Cave. Dr. Holsinger outlined many reasons for protecting these caves including specific details about these caves' historical, geological, hydrological, and biological significance. An offer for assistance of the Cave Board was expressed. The letter further states "the Virginia Cave Board feels it is essential that Grand Caverns and the surrounding karst on the eastern end of Cave Hill be acquired by the state and given permanent protection in the form of a state park or natural area or some combination of park and conservation/natural area."

(Letter from DCR Director Joe Maroon to Dr. John Holsinger)

Mr. Smith also noted that DCR Director Joe Maroon sent a letter dated July 31, 2002 in reply to Dr. Holsinger's letter. Mr. Maroon wrote that he was not fully aware of the biological and historical significance of Grand Caverns and the associated caves. The letter explains that voter approval of the State Parks and Natural Areas Bond in November is a key to DCR assuming operations of Grand Caverns. Meetings are occurring between the Regional Park Authority staff and DCR to discuss the possible future transition of Grand Caverns and Natural Chimney to the Department of Conservation and Recreation. He welcomes input from the Cave Board on areas for possible expansion of the land holdings adjoining Grand Caverns. The input of Cave Board members is encouraged in formulating cave and karst management techniques as well as advice on educational and interpretive matters for the visiting public for the Grand Caverns Property. Mr. Maroon looks forward to working with the Cave Board on the Grand Caverns Project. He asks for the support of the members of the Cave Board "to educate Virginia voters on the State Parks and Natural Areas Bond issue and to urge them to vote on November 5th."

Kathy Harbury noted that Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act relates to the preservation of historic structures and might have some jurisdiction. Grand Caverns is the oldest Show Cave in the United States. Ms. Harbury pointed out

that Federal grant moneys might be available for projects such as rehabilitation of roofs on historic structures at Grand Caverns. More information about the Section 106 regulations may be found at the website: <http://www.achp.gov/regsflow.html>. Ms. Harbury and Karen Kastning plan to explore possible ways to coordinate efforts to protect Grand Caverns with the Virginia Department of Historical Resources.

8. U. S. Forest Service Significant Cave Listing

Joey Fagan reported that nomination forms were nearly complete for nomination of five Virginia caves located on U.S. Forest Service Lands for listing as significant under provisions of the Federal Cave Protection Act of 1988. The completed nomination forms will be sent directly to Jerry Trout, National Coordinator Cave Resources for the U. S. Forest Service and to Bill Damon, Forest Supervisor, and Mike Barbour of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest. The applications will include conservation site boundaries around each of the caves as defined by the DCR/DNH Karst Program. The Board had a chance to review the draft applications and make comments or suggestions. The caves being nominated are:

1. Shires Saltpetre Cave
2. Kelly Cave
3. Millers Cove Cave
4. Starr Chapel Cave
5. Rocky Hollow Cave

The Board expressed an interest in submitting additional nominations in the future.

9. Virginia Karst Protection Program Report

Wil Orndorff reported on the activities of the Virginia Karst Program, many of which were mentioned previously during the meeting. Of particular importance is the project to define Conservation Site Boundaries around Virginia's Significant Caves. Funding for work performed during the year 2002 is funded through a contract between the Virginia Department of Transportation and the Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Natural Heritage. The Cave Conservancy of the Virginias has provided a grant for an additional \$10,000 for laboratory analysis of charcoal packets and water samples for the project. Benjamin Schwartz and Zenah Orndorff have spent the summer performing field investigations involving more than 20 dye traces in conjunction with this project. Approximately 37 conservation sites containing more than 70 of Virginia's significant caves will be defined by the end of the year 2002. This information will be used to create a GIS layer for use in environmental review and planning by the DCR Division of Natural Heritage and VDOT. Any project intersecting one of these conservation sites will be closely scrutinized to minimize impacts to cave and karst resources. Specific cave locations will not be a part of the conservation site data layer.

Karst Program personnel participated in the three day long 2002 Virginia Tech Farm and Family Showcase with a display highlighting caves and karst and groundwater protection issues. Approximately 38,000 people attended the 2002 Virginia Tech Farm and Family Showcase.

New Business

10. Sinkhole Legislation

Joey Fagan, speaking on behalf of Mr. William Keith, stated that the Virginia Cave Board should form an ad hoc committee to pursue legislation to improve the protection of sinkholes and groundwater resources. Chairman Barbara Moss appointed William Keith to act as chair of an ad hoc committee to seek ways to improve the protection of sinkholes and groundwater resources. Mr. Keith is charged with the task of defining the goals of his committee and suggesting members for the committee.

Dr. Ernst Kastning described actions and regulations by localities relating to sinkhole protection.

11. State Parks and Natural Areas Bond

Larry Smith provided details about the State Parks and Natural Areas Bond issue on November 5, 2002 ballot. Mr. Smith passed out informational fliers on the bond to all those in attendance for their use in educating the public. He asked members of the board to provide the information on the State Parks and Natural Areas Bond issue to citizens and to urge them to vote on November 5, 2002

12. Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Dr. Kurt Buhlmann told the Board about a conservation organization, with which he is associated, Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation. PARC's goal is "to conserve amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats as integral parts of our ecosystem and culture through proactive and coordinated public/private partnerships." PARC provides voluntary habitat management guidelines for private and public landowners. Dr. Buhlmann distributed two handouts, "Partners in Amphibian Conservation" and "Habitat Management Guide for Conservation of Amphibians and Reptiles." Dr. Buhlmann suggested that this simple and straightforward educational approach that involves lots of pictures and little text has proven to be an effective measure for managing and protecting sensitive habitats. A similar educational approach might be considered for owners of sinkhole and caves as an alternative to laws and regulations. The Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation website may be accessed at: <http://www.parcplace.org/>

13. Emergency Contact for Cave Board Meetings

Joey Fagan suggested on behalf of William Keith that an emergency contact telephone number should be available to Board members the day of a meeting. Such an emergency number should probably be a cell phone number.

Chairman Moss directed that an emergency telephone number be distributed to Board members for their use in the event of a delay or an emergency on Cave Board meeting days.

14. Public Comments

Larry Smith suggested the Cave Board invite members from caving organizations in Virginia to meetings of the Board. This would keep open the lines of communication between the Virginia Cave Board and stakeholders in the caving community.

15. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Virginia Cave Board will be at 1:00 p.m. at Endless Caverns at New Market, Virginia on Saturday, November 23, 2002. Meetings of the Board committees will begin at 11:00 a.m.

An alternate site for the meeting is the Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Soil and Water Conservation Office in Staunton, Virginia.

16. Adjournment

Chairman Barbara Moss adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Joey Fagan
Virginia Cave Board Secretary

